

For his bravery in uniform, Corporal Coleman received many medals, awards and decorations, including the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal.

Brent was born in Pikeville, in eastern Kentucky, and spent the majority of his life in the area. From a young age he was not afraid to speak his mind. When Brent was about six or seven, he and his family went to the circus. They had lions there, and the lion tamer was directing them with his whip.

But young Brent thought the lion tamer was using the whip on the lions—and that despite their sharp claws and teeth, they needed a small boy to come to their aid. “Stop that right now!” he yelled to the lion tamer. The whole circus audience laughed at Brent’s display of compassion and bravery.

Brent loved sports, and grew up playing T-Ball, baseball, and football. Once when Brent and his cousin Ben were both 12 years old, Brent showed Ben how to hold the football close to his chest. Ben took the ball and ran, Brent tackled him, and I guess Ben was holding the ball a little too tightly—it broke his shoulder and his rib.

Gary took Brent and his brother, Jason, to the Super Bowl every year. Brent’s favorite team was the Detroit Lions, and star running back Barry Sanders was his role model. Brent, Gary, and Jason would fly to wherever the big game was and stay for the weekend; they never missed a Super Bowl.

Football was more than just a game to watch for Brent, it was his passion, and he excelled at it. At Pikeville High School, Brent was an all-county running back for the Pikeville Panthers. He was named offensive player of the year at the start of his senior year, in 1996, and he is still the leading rusher and scorer in the school’s history.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association recognizes Brent for holding these records: 8th overall in career yards rushing, tenth overall in career touchdowns, and 11th overall in career points scored.

“Brent was idolized by the students and their parents,” says Eddie Coleman, Brent’s uncle. “He was a local hero before he was the real hero.”

With so much talent came an appropriate nickname. Brent’s teammates called him “Rocket,” because he could find a hole and plow right through it.

Footage from a local television station shows Brent earned yet another nickname—“Stumpy.” “I guess because I’m short and fat,” a grinning Brent said to the TV reporter.

“He didn’t lack for confidence,” his father Gary tells us. “Brent was someone with compassion, always trying to do good, always trying to do the right thing, and he had a competitive personality.”

Everyone around him could see Brent was special, and that did not change

when Brent joined the Army. After attending Marshall University in Huntington, WV, for 2 years, he enlisted on July 11, 2001, and underwent basic training at the U.S. Army Armor Center at Fort Knox, KY. He graduated Basic in the top five overall.

Brent was then assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, CO. Upon graduating basic training, he told his family, “I know I can make it on my own.”

Brent saw service to his country as a way of life. “He was going to make a career out of it, and I encouraged him to,” says Gary. Brent held several positions on the M1A1 Abrams tank, including gunner and loader, and he eventually became a tank commander.

Stationed in Colorado Springs, Brent met a special woman there, and Brent and Kirsten Sinley Coleman became husband and wife. They married in March, 3 weeks before Brent deployed to Iraq.

The star running back and tank commander who had already acquired a few nicknames soon picked up another from his fellow soldiers: “Hollywood.” I will let SSG Jason Gallegos, who served with Brent, explain why.

Brent “was about five-foot-five and weighed about 175 pounds,” Staff Sergeant Gallegos says. “His body was short in stature, but he was pure muscle with about maybe eight to nine percent body fat.”

“He looked like an action figure, a poster child of what a United States soldier looks like. . . . The reason behind the nickname was because Corporal Coleman worked out hard every day here for two to three hours a day.

“Then whenever he got the opportunity, he would go outside our bunker into the sun in just his PT shorts, place mirrors around him, put on his shades and throw on some music and tan. It was like he was a movie star.”

Brent was well liked by his fellow soldiers; and not just because of funny stories like these. He was liked and respected because he always gave his best, and encouraged others to do the same.

“He would always volunteer for the tough missions,” Staff Sergeant Gallegos says. “‘Be smart and be aggressive,’ he would say, because he felt if you’re passive then you not only endanger yourself, but also your soldiers. . . . He was there for anybody, no matter what platoon, what day of the week, or what time of day.”

At Brent’s funeral, his sergeant told the Coleman family, “Brent was 24 and they get a lot of 18-year-olds. Brent would always volunteer to take the young ones’ places to protect them.”

“He served his country. He never complained. He was made for the military, physically and mentally,” Brent’s father, Gary, says. “He said he had a job to do.”

Mr. President, I had the honor of meeting Gary Coleman in 2005, and I presented him with an American flag

flown over this Capitol. Neither that flag nor the words we say here today can make up for what the Coleman family has lost. But they are the very least we can do to honor Brent’s memory.

We are thinking today of Brent’s loved ones, including his wife Kirsten Sinley Coleman; his mother Janie Adkins Johnson; his father Gary Keene Coleman; his brother Jason Byron Coleman; his grandmother Ruby Coleman Damron; and many other family members and friends.

Mr. President, today, March 10, is Brent’s birthday. It is a day to celebrate Brent’s life, and I thought an appropriate day for me to speak on how he lived, and what he lived for.

To the Coleman family who have lost a husband, brother, and son, I want to say this: CPL Gary Brent Coleman left this world a hero. And on behalf of a grateful Nation, the U.S. Senate honors his life of sacrifice and service.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

AIR FORCE CONTRACT AWARD

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in the last several days, we have learned some surprising things about the Air Force’s decision to award a \$40 billion contract to the European company, Airbus.

The Air Force wants Airbus, which is headquartered in Toulouse, France, to supply our next generation of aerial refueling tankers. It chose Airbus over the American company, Boeing, which has been making those tankers for the last 50 years.

I have made it clear over the past several days that I think this decision is shortsighted and dangerous. But today, even more questions have been raised about the process the Air Force followed to make this decision. So I want to take the opportunity this afternoon to walk through the impact I believe the Air Force decision will have because I think we need to take a good hard look at whether we as Members of the Senate think this contract should be finalized.

First, we need to be very cautious about any decision that awards the right to build a critical part of our military air technology to a company